

Science Writing 101

Cheat Sheet

Leonie Joubert

www.leoniejoubert.co.za

Brain-training for a new 'ball game'

Writing for a 'popular' audience is a very different style to writing academically. Mastering it calls for:

- *Practice, practice, practice*
- *Read, read, read*

What's in the toolbox?

Different writing styles to model your work on. Note the length, structure, tone, voice, and attribution of facts

- *News*
- *Feature*
- *Press release*

- *Blog*
- *Opinion piece*
- *Letter to the editor*

Planning your article

- *Know your audience*
- *Know your medium*
- *Keep it conversational*
- *Lose the jargon*
- *Write in the 'active' voice*
- *Structure your information: 'so what?', the 'angle' & the '5 Ws and an H'*



Images by Eric Miller, from *The Hungry Season*



Dealing with the media

- *Speak slowly*
- *Repeat numbers*
- *Spell names, give titles*
- *Three 'take home' messages*
- *'Sound bites'*
- *Start your point with the interviewer's question*
- *Dressing for the camera*
- *Hone your skills*
- *Pause, think, answer*
- *Fact checking: do-s and don't-s*
- *Understand and respect deadlines*

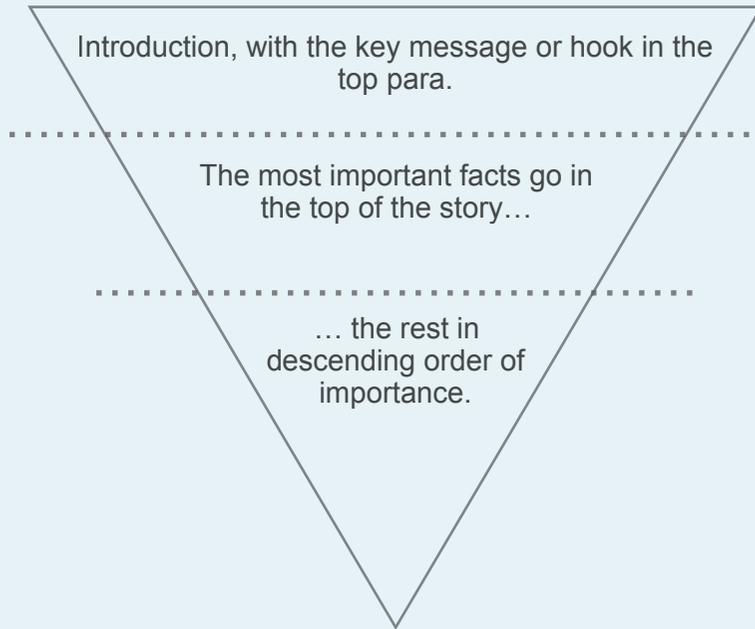


Image from *City Desired* by Sydelle Willow Smith

Image by Michael Groenewald



FIGURE 2: THE INVERTED PYRAMID FOR HARD NEWS



The inverted pyramid comes from the days before computer-based publishing in journalism, when there simply wasn't time to do lengthy rewrites of articles that were too long to fit onto the day's page layout. It was more efficient to write articles where the sub could just cut the bottom few paragraphs off the story without losing its meaning.

FIGURE 3: FEATURE AND NARRATIVE

